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ABSTRACT

A model for coordinating an internship program in a large psychology department is presented. The most successful components of the program involve a personalized advising system and a departmentally-defined contract between the student and faculty sponsor. An integral part of the program is an advising and consultation procedure. Each prospective intern selects a relevant "pre-course," which serves as the theoretical base from which to pursue the field experience. After an information meeting for all prospective interns, each student talks individually with the internship coordinator, and a brief proposal is formulated. After departmental approval, students work with the university's Office of Internships, which help students in preparing resumes and making agency connections. Through additional meetings with the internship coordinator, the internship prospectus and academic contract are developed. The prospectus describes the internship duties and the relationship of the internship to the psychology major, the pre-course, career plans, and personal interests. The student must keep a weekly journal, submit a summary report, and maintain contact with the faculty sponsor. A internship contract form and internship guidelines are appended. (SW)

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COORDINATING AN UNDERGRADUATE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM IN A LARGE PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

A Paper presented as part of a symposium entitled Personalizing Educational Opportunities for Undergraduates in a Large Psychology Department at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Anaheim, August, 1983.

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Coordinating an Undergraduate Internship Program In a Large Psychology Department

Richard P. Halgin

The internship or field practicum program has become an established and respected component of many undergraduate psychology departments, though such programs are more commonly found in smaller departments. Larger departments have probably shied away from them due to the significant administrative burden involved in establishing and coordinating such a program for a large number of students. This paper will present a model for the coordination of an internship program in a large department. Observations will be based on my six years of experience as Internship Coordinator at the University of Massachusetts where approximately 125 students per year go on internship.

The internship program in the psychology department was established in the early 1970's in response to student demand that their major provide them with more job-applicable experience. The department recognized the value of field-based learning and appointed an Internship Coordinator whose major teaching responsibility was the coordination of a program which would maintain high standards of academic rigor. In the early days of the program this was a difficult task since the student response was overwhelming. Unfortunately, part of the very positive response was based upon the perception of internships as easy ways to earn credit. Since those days, the program has been refined such that the easy-credit-seekers have gone else-

where in their pursuit, as they have discovered that setting up and carrying out an internship entails a great investment of time, energy, and commitment. The most successful components of the program involve a personalized advising system, a departmentally defined contract between the student and faculty sponsor, including a standardized set of academic requirements associated with each internship.

Integral to the success of an internship program is an advising and consultation procedure which can carefully scrutinize the appropriateness of a student's internship interest and also provide the student with advice and direction regarding the internship. After six years of doing this kind of consultation with students, I have become aware of many issues which routinely arise during this procedure. One of my first surprises was to discover how many students viewed the internship as a quick and easy method of getting academic credits. During the early 1970's with that period's "anything goes" philosophy that perception was probably an accurate one. A second disturbing request which I have repeatedly received from students has been for the granting of internship credit for experiences or work already completed, in some cases years ago.

One of my first tasks was to formulate a clear rationale for the existence of the internship experience so that I would be capable of establishing a respected, academically relevant internship program. Internships had to be validated as legitimate academic experiences, and the best way to do this seemed to be through establishing a firm connection with the academic major. The decision was made to have each prospective intern first select a relevant "pre-course" which could serve as the theoretical base from which to pursue the field experience. For example, students

proposing to work with psychotic patients could take Abnormal Psychology. In the final analysis of the internship experience students would be required to write a paper relating their academic pre-course with their internship experience.

An advising system was established in which interested students could develop appropriate internship plans and be given assistance in carrying them out. The success of this system has been due in great part to a strong campus wide Office of Internships which shares a significant amount of the administrative burden. Early in each semester an informational meeting is held to which all students interested in psychology internships are invited; typically a hundred students attend this meeting, and of this group 30 to 40 students follow through to the point of placement. Interested students subsequently make appointments with the internship coordinator in which the merits of an internship for that student are addressed, and a brief proposal is formulated. Students who are given departmental approval then proceed to the University's Office of Internships, which keeps up-to-date records on approximately 2,000 internship placements. Students are assisted in preparing resumes and making agency connections.

When the student gets down to the final few placement options another appointment is scheduled with the Internship Coordinator in which the outline for the student's internship prospectus and academic contract are refined, and an appropriate faculty sponsor is recommended. The Student then writes his or her prospectus which must include the following components: 1) description of internship duties, 2) relationship of intern-

ship to psychology major in general, and to pre-course in particular, 3) relationship of internship to career plans and personal interests.

The prospectus is then approved by the internship coordinator and the faculty sponsor and a contract is signed, which stipulates that the student must: 1) keep a weekly journal, 2) submit a summary report which integrates field activities with pre-course material and 3) maintain scheduled contact with the faculty sponsor.

The costs of administering such an extensive internship program are considerable. The greatest cost, of course, is that of time. Countless hours of advising and consultation time are required. And the success of such a program is dependent in great part on the willingness of a faculty person to make a major time commitment. Such a responsibility should be considered the equivalent of teaching at least one course each semester, and an appropriate teaching load reduction should be given. Not only must this person prepare students for internships, but he or she must also serve as the department's watchdog, ensuring that the highest quality of field placements and supervision are provided to students. This individual must advise students, and approve of those who are appropriate, maintain agency contacts, evaluate contracts, and ensure standards of academic excellence.

As is evident the establishment of an internship tends to be a somewhat complicated and arduous process; this is not completely unintentional. What has been found over the years is that those students expecting an "instant internship" often turn away from the program when they discover the amount of thought and work required by the placement procedure. Those willing to follow through are characteristically more mature and responsible, and thus better prepared for the demands of most internships.

Students report that the extensive advising procedure gives them a valuable opportunity to think seriously about their future and to refine their options. They find that the program takes their career questions and confusion seriously. As would be expected, most students retrospectively report that the internship was the highlight of their undergraduate program; most find that the internship helped them define what they wanted to do after graduation, and for some what they did not want to do. Students find that the internship gave them a realistic context in which to apply the knowledge acquired as part of their psychology major. If a department is willing to commit the extensive resources needed, the internship program can become one of the greatest opportunities of the undergraduate curriculum.

PSYCHOLOGY 388 FIELD PRACTICUM/INTERNSHIP CONTRACT

Name_____ Semester of Internship_____

Address_____ Number of Credits_____

_____ Pre-Course_____

Telephone_____ Psychology Faculty Sponsor_____

Site of Internship_____ Student Number_____

_____

INTERN AGREES TO THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF INTERNSHIP DUTIES:

1. I will keep a journal of my activities, to be submitted at the end of the internship period for evaluation by my sponsor. This journal or log must be submitted to sponsor no later than the last day of classes of the term during which the internship was done.

2. I will submit a summary report (approx. 10-25 pages) integrating my field activities with learning from my pre-course to my sponsor. (This report must demonstrate the connection between the theories in my pre-course and the practical aspects of my internship. This report must be submitted no later than the last day of classes of the term during which the internship is done).

3. I will report by phone, letter, or visit to Sponsor at least once a month during the internship period, in addition to completing a progress report which will be sent to me by the Office of Internships.

4. I will see that my supervisior in the field writes a letter of evaluation of my performance as an intern, to be submitted no later than the last day of the field practicum. (This letter will be requested from supervisor by the Office of Internships.)

5. I will complete any additional requirements specified below by my Sponsor (e.g., book report, oral presentations, research proposals, etc.).

COPIES OF CONTRACT AND PROSPECTUS

1) Psych. Dept. Internship Coordinator
   Prof. R. Halgin - Tobin 403
2) Faculty Sponsor
3) Office of Internships
   (Curry Hicks)
4) Undergraduate Secretary
   (Tobin 401)
5) Student

_____ _____
(Date) (Intern)

_____ _____
(Date) (Faculty Sponsor)

_____ _____
(Date) (Psychology Department Internship Coordinator) Prof. R. Halgin

_____ _____
(Date) Office of Internship Coordinator (Curry Hicks)

PSYCHOLOGY 388 PROSPECTUS I

1. Brief description of duties at internship.

2. State how this proposed internship experience makes sense in the context of your overall academic program:

   a) How does it relate to your major?

   b) How does it relate to specific courses (including your chosen pre-course and post-course).

3. State how this proposed internship experience makes sense in the context of your life or career plans.

4. State how this proposed internship experience makes sense in the context of your own personal needs or interests.

(This document must be neatly typed. Each of the questions should require a minimum of one typed page. The original plus four copies must be submitted before approval will be given.)

GUIDELINES FOR PSYCHOLOGY 388 PRACTICUM/INTERNSHIP

Students are encouraged to expand their undergraduate educational opportunities through volunteer service in community agencies or institutions when it is in keeping with their academic interests. This experiential dimension to education is a useful prelude both to employment after graduation and to decision-making about fields of gradua e education. One avenue through which this can be done is the Psychology Department Field Practicum program. For the sake of definition, an internship is a full-time placement of at least 40 hours per week for the duration of a semester; part-time placements are generally referred to as field practica, although the terms are occasionally used interchangeably.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for a field practicum or internship in psychology, a student must have completed the following requirements:

1. The student must have completed Psychology 110, 150, 240, and 241 with a combined "B" average or better.

2. The student must have Junior class standing and at least one semester in residence at UMass.

SPECIFICATIONS

1. Independent study courses such as the field practicum do not satisfy departmental or university core requirements.

2. Not counting Psychology 240 and Psychology 241, the student must complete 24 but no more than 40 credits in psychology courses numbered above 200. Some of these credits may be obtained through independent study, but at least 18 of these credits must be obtained in regular courses.

3. Psychology 388 credit may be granted by any UMass/Amherst Psychology faculty member who has an interest in sponsoring a student while he/she is on a practicum. The faculty member need not have direct expertise in the practicum area, though it may be helpful to have a sponsor whose expertise relates to the field experience.

4. Psychology 388 credits are awarded on a mandatory PASS/FAIL basis.

5. Students may receive no more than 15 practicum/internship credits while enrolled at the University. Up to 15 credits may be elected during a single semester or may be distributed over several semesters of a student's academic career. (The Faculty Senate has ruled that a maximum of 15 credits be associated with internship work and countable toward the 120 graduation credits.) A maximum total of 15 Psychology credits may be obtained in Psychology independent study (Psychology 388, 396, 398 combined). Psychology 388 credits are awarded on the normal academic basis of 1 credit for each 40 hours of involvement. On this basis, a student involved in a Practicum for eight or nine hours each week for the entire semester should be taking three Psychology 388 credits, and so on up to fifteen.

6. Approval for Practicum credit normally will be based on a student's ability to place his/her proposed experience in the academic context of a designated pre-course. The pre-course, which may be taken in any semester prior to the student's off-campus internship, might supply knowledge or methodology valuable for the practicum.

7. The election of Psychology 388 credits requires the submission of a summary report (approx. 10-15 pages) no later than the last day of classes of the term during which the internship is done. This report must demonstrate the connection between the theories in the pre-course and the practical aspects of the internship.

8. Both the Psychology 388 Field Practicum/Internship Contract and the Prospectus I, with all required signatures, must arrive at the Office of Internships no later than the last week of classes in the semester prior to the internship.

PROCEDURE

To be done prior to pre-registration.

1. Discuss with the practicum advisor (Tobin 403) the merits of a field practicum in the context of your academic program.

2. Formulate a brief proposal of what you would like to learn, and justify how it fits into your academic program.

3. Visit the Office of Internships where you will be given further assistance in delineating your practicum, in preparing a resume, and in locating a placement. Students may wish to speak with a counselor at the Office of Internships earlier in the process, and are encouraged to do so. Students are urged to keep in touch with that office, as their counselors are quite knowledgeable and helpful.

4. Discuss prospective placements with the practicum advisor who will help you find a faculty sponsor and a placement.

5. Once your placement and faculty sponsor have been confirmed, complete the Psychology 388 Field Practicum/Internship Contract, prepare the Prospectus I, and fill in the appropriate information on the Office of Internships Credit Confirmation form. Sign these materials and have your faculty sponsor approve and sign them, including the back of the Credit Confirmation form.

6. Make four photo-copies of the Contract and the Prospectus I.

7. Take the originals and four copies of the Contract and Prospectus I to the practicum advisor in Tobin 403 for approval and signature. Leave the originals with the practicum advisor.

8. Take the Credit Confirmation form and one copy of the Contract and Prospectus I to the undergraduate secretary (Tobin 401) who will provide the schedule number and faculty signature on the front of the Credit Confirmation form and will register you for Psychology 388.

9. The remaining copies should be distributed to the Office of Internships, your faculty sponsor, and yourself.